HIS LITTLE RED HEN

By MARION HILL, Author of "The Mol-Gobbin," &c.

It presupposes a decided amount of lovableness—a nickname does—and people who never achieve the indignity are generally so cramful of good points that they never have room for the one necessary point more—charm.

She was a dear little thing—that small Henrie—about the nicest child that a traveling theatrical company could ever carry around with it and not grow annoyed with; because youngsters in a troupe are generally no end of a nuisance, being "neither man nor woman, neither ghost nor human," as Poe puts it, of the bells, but "ghouls." Henrie was far indeed from being a ghoul, though, to tell the truth, she was as uncanny a baby as ever kept grown people guessing; and it was easy enough, from the look of her, to tell why her father always called her his Little Red Hen, for she was copper-colored as a cranberry. This comprehensive description has a discouragingly ugly sound, and it fits to a T; nevertheless Henrie was as pretty as a bronze elf, with hair exactly the color of a new-one cent piece, and eyes and brows and lashes to match. Her father, Jack Germaine, was pleased as peacocks about this coloring, and used to dress her in bronze velvet, with fixings in keeping—shoes, gloves, and ribbons all of the same hue—so that she was a red-brown shine from top to toe, like a sprout of young oak in springtime.

She never said smart things. We couldn't have stood that. But she said awfully shrewd ones, or, at least, a shrewd thought showed back of the simple words, as once when she asked her father:

"Jack, why didn't you name me Geneva, after my mother?" The tragedy of the business, all uncomprehended though it was, cast a shadow over the brilliance of her glinting eyes—those red-brown eyes throw lights like sparks.

Now, naturally it was in Jack Germaine's mind that he would rather see his baby daughter dead than named after his untamable waif of a wife, but, of course, he could not voice such a sentiment, so quoth cheerfully:

"What's the matter with being named after Aunt Henrietta?"

As a good many of us were standing around within earshot, Jack Germaine put extra heartiness into his bluff, and the child shrank sensitively. She brooded to herself for quite a while and then dropped asleep in a frightening fashion that she had—frightening for the reason that she always looked as if she had died—great brown circles underneath her red lashes and an odd pallor on her tiny face.

We all knew that there was a quirk wrong with her heart action, it was too fast or two slow or too something; at any rate, its abnormal behavior was the reason why Henrie traveled around with her father instead of remaining with the Aunt Henrietta in question. The doctor said the child worried too much when separated from both father and mother and had better be with one of them. It would be a clever doctor who could induce Geneva Germaine to saddle her artistic career with the care of a baby, so the charge fell to Jack. Of course, Jack and Geneva were in different companies. Theatrical agencies and managers always carefully see to it that husbands and wives do not travel together. Even if they had not in this case, Geneva would. Geneva Germaine needed plenty of room, and got it. All that Jack needed was a home, and didn't get it. That such people should marry each other is quite inevitable.

It is a wonder Jack Germaine did not go all to pieces during a season, for in addition to an arduous part and the duties which fell to him as acting manager, the care that he put upon his delicate baby was exhausting in itself. It is a popular witticism that a man can't take care of a child, whereas the fact is that a man outwomans a woman in tenderness and intelligent skill when the fates ordain that he shall play mother as well as father. Henrie wouldn't have lasted five minutes if left to the gentle mothering of Geneva. Geneva looked the part all right, though—had eyes as velvety as purple pansies and a soft beauty of face that would have knocked spots out of Niobe for devotional affection.

Though Jack held out during a season, Henrie never did, drooping from day to day till it was always a race for life to get her into the country in the summer. What she wanted was a woman's companionship. We had two lovely girls with us, Essie Airly and Helen Keith, and Henrie loved Essie, but wouldn't tolerate Helen, which was a pity, for Helen was the mothering kind, while Essie, though sweet and winsome, was as unmaternal as a chicken—you know how a hen can stand on a chick, which squawks its life away underfoot, while the hen looks kind of heartwrung and miserable, but hasn't the sense to step off the victim. Well, that was Essie. She could play with a child, work for it, feed it, metaphorically scratch for it, and present it with juicy bits, but she couldn't mother, couldn't coo and cuddle and croon and cure aches with a kiss, in mystic mother fashion.

As for Helen—well, Helen and Jack loved each other, and Henrie divined it and resented it for Geneva's sake—and there's the thing in a nutshell.

Really, we haven't any private life. When we are not before the footlights performing to an audience we are in a Pullman car or a hotel lobby performing, though unwillingly and often unwittingly, for the delight and diversion of a public which doesn't have to pay for the privilege. Our letters are handed out to us by the hotel clerk or the stage doorkeeper, or, rather, those worthies allow us to root among them, and we all know the others' business. If a man loves his wife and she doesn't write to him, we know it; if he isn't overkeen about correspondence and she is, we know that, too. And if the writer is another man's wife, or another woman's husband, why, we're apt to hop onto a combination of that sort quick as streaks.

And the things we hear! We are all idiots together in the matter of talking too much. We shut a door of a room, fancy ourselves hermetically entombed, and proceed to exchange anguish or goo-goo, utterly regardless of open transoms. We have the courtesy to pretend, however, that what is not addressed to us direct has not been overheard.

We none of us confided to another that Essie Airly was patiently in love with Fenton Lessing, that Lessing was in love with Helen, and that Helen was in love with Jack Germaine and he with her, both breaking their hearts trying to keep faith with themselves and with Geneva, who never by any chance kept faith with anybody.

The procession of events was exactly in line with the ancient fairy tale, "Water won't quench fire, fire won't burn stick, stick won't hit dog, dog won't bite pig, pig won't go over the stile, and we'll never get home to-night."

The nursery tale version of it was Chapman Childs'. He was the low comedian. He had to be. He wanted to be a tragedian, and spiritually was capable of it, having a scholar's mind and the silver voice of an orator, but the breath of his life happened to be confined in a very comic body. He had a paunch which belied him, for he rarely ate one full meal a week, having a screw loose with his digestion; also, he had legs a trifle bowed, and his face was fat and heavy; his eyebrows, too, had a grotesque tilt. His general make-up was low comedy, and that settled it. If he tried to be manly and serious the public let him starve. Under such circumstances one ordinarily makes up one's mind to be funny. Usually, too, more brains go to a first-class fool than to a dozen leading men.

If Jack Germaine played mother to Henrie, why, Chapman Childs was grandmother, and a good one, too. Toward the end of the season, he had worked himself and the rest of us into nervous jimjams concerning the baby's evident loss of health. By the time we had reached—what was the town now? Can't remember the name, but know it was out West somewhere, for we had to play Sunday night—wherever it was. Henrie wilted suddenly, like a little brown nasturtium.

"Don't drag her around to the theater to-night, Jack," ordered Chapman angrily, mad as hops because his feelings were strained. "Tuck her in bed and leave her to sleep. We'll all come and have supper with you, Henrie."

"All right," said Henrie, weakly.

"All right," said Jack, just as weakly.

It sounded like a sensible argument, but we had grown so used to seeing the tiny lady at the wings that that night's performance went like a funeral, though the audience screamed as usual, and we were all mighty glad to get through and hurry back to the hotel.

"How's my Little Red Hen?" called Jack, while yet away down the corridor. He did not stop to think it was the middle of the night and that certain weirdly constructed folk might be wanting to sleep. To him, and to us, the middle of the night was ever the likeliest part of the day.

"Oo-hoo!" she piped up, invisible. The sound was good to hear. One is apt to fancy always that a child left alone will go and swallow something, or will fall off, or fall out, or will croak somehow. A child is awfully like strong drink—once get used to it and you can't be comfortable with it or without it.

We all burst cheerfully in. Except for Fenton Lessing. He was never cheerful; he was too young and happy to be cheerful. And besides he was carrying an armful of bottles. Essie had a tray of sandwiches.

Henrie was completely snowed under with Geneva's pictures, the bed was covered with them.

"I think this is the prettiest of all," she said, cramming one into her father's hand. "Don't you, Jack?"

"Very pretty," he assented. It was tough on Jack. His wife's face smiled up at him, as impudent as life.

"Is her season a long one?" pursued Henrie.

"I don't know," said Jack.

"Will she sign for a summer engagement, do you think?"

"I cannot possibly tell, Henrie."

"Doesn't she write to you ever?"

"No, Henrie."

"Why, do you suppose?"

"She never was any hand at writing letters," he said. Then, under his breath, "to me!"

"If she doesn't sign for the summer, will she come to see us?"

If ever a man looked as if it would be a relief to lie, it was Jack. His little daughter stared at him hopefully. But, between these two, whose brief home happiness had been fabricked on lies and wrecked by them, there was a solemn pact of truth, truth to be taken by the handle if possible; if not, then by the blade, as now——

"No."

"Why?" whispered Henrie.

"We're too slow for Geneva," said Jack, forcing a rollicking tone and rejoicing to see that he was able to keep back the deathly pallor which had begun creeping into Henrie's face. "She likes good times and good company. She'll probably go abroad, as she always does."

"Geneva's popular, isn't she?" crowed Henrie, her pride returning.

"She is," said Jack dryly.

"Get your toes out of the way, Hen; I want to put down the tray," ordered Essie, glad of a pretense which enabled her to bundle the photographs away to a side table.

"How did the play go to-night, Jack?" asked Henrie.

"Great!"

"What sort of a house?"

"Stuffed!"

"Did they laugh at your funny scene in the last act?"

"Fell off the benches!"

"Oo-oo!" Henrie rubbed her soft hands in a shuddering delight. She felt a proprietary interest in that scene—Jack always used to play it "to" her, nights. "Don't leave me again," she begged suddenly.

"I won't," promised Jack, "for I see you do not sleep."

"No," murmured Henrie, "I think."

"What about?" challenged Childs, taking the evening paper from his pocket.

Henrie made no answer; her eyes were fixed darkly on Helen Keith, to whose side Jack had gone.

"Any time to-night, Germaine," suggested Lessing, glowering over the tops of the bottles. Jack relieved him, none too genially. There was open hostility between the two.

"By Jove!" snorted Childs, throwing a startled look from the newspaper to Jack. Then he nervously rolled up the sheet and stuffed it in his pocket.

"I've read it," said Jack gamely. He cast a protective glance at Henrie. "But be careful you don't——"

"God bless my soul, never!" threw in Childs.

"—let the little shaver into the joke," finished Jack stoically.

Geneva played the same town the following week. It was no unusual coincidence, this matrimonial game of hare and hounds; couples can dodge each other in and out of cities the season through, without once meeting, even at a depot; but, to stir advance interest, and in a way best calculated to catch the public's winking eye, the papers were stocked with anecdotes of such of Geneva's amusements as were printable. To Geneva herself it added the final pleasure to her escapades that she committed them under her husband's name. This last of hers was certainly very funny—to any one else's husband, that is.

"Were we long coming?" asked Helen, bending lovingly over Henrie.

"No," said the child curtly, turning away.

"Monday night in a new town," explained Essie Airly. "You know what that means, Henrie. "We'll be through half an hour earlier to-morrow."

"Get a cork out, Jack. I'm chewing feathers," mourned Childs.

Supper was soon in progress. It was a failure as far as Henrie was concerned, she eating nothing and soon dropping to sleep. It was a fashion she had, to sleep when we were all around her and to stay awake when she was left to sleep.

Instituted for Henrie, the meal was soon over when she refused to partake. But who wants to rush to bed at 1 o'clock? We separated into groups and chatted quietly.

"I'm going down stairs to hunt for mail," scowled Lessing, glooming terribly at Jack and Helen, who were sitting by Henrie's cot. "Come with me, Helen, won't you, and we can take a stroll."

"No, thank you," answered Helen, with sweet indifference. "Bring my mail, if there is any."

Fenton Lessing played a little scene all by himself. He threw a look of reproach at the heartless fair one, cast a meaning glance at the bell, as if to hint that if she wanted a menial she could ring for one, then appealed to heaven for help, comprehension, and the gift of patience, and departed sulkily upon his errand.

"Helen," said Jack. He spoke low, to her alone, and his voice was troubled.

"Yes?" The brief word was a whole volume. Shorn of the indifference of a moment ago, her tone was warm with life.

"We are old friends."

For a while that was all; she looking at him meanwhile with a keen intuition of what was coming. Presently he continued:

"Better still, we are good friends. May I say something?"

Laughter and jest were humming around them; their sorrow set them apart.

"Will the saying help, Jack?" she asked, and there was warning in her words.

He honestly pondered her question.

"Yes," he said finally, but with evident depression, "I think it may."

"Say what you like, then," she permitted, depressed, too.

"It's—it's Fenton Lessing. He's a nice chap, Helen. He comes of a good family, and—well, the boy's all right." That seemed to be all, absolutely all. Germaine was entirely finished. With his eyes fixed sadly upon the woman who understood him he quietly patted the sleeping child who lay between.

They were silent, but it cannot be said that they did not speak, for every thought which his heart held leaped into her eyes and answered him there. Whatever it was, they fought the fight through to its end and the mastery was hers, and he was glad, for he quietly lifted her hand to his lips and kissed it.

"And I shall never marry Fenton, or any one," she concluded, as if to some masterly array of argument.

Reaching out to the table he picked up one of Geneva's pictures. "Any court would free me in an hour," he said quietly, almost dispassionately, but the cords leaped into view in his clenched hand. He struck the radiant, pictured prettiness and threw it from him. His glance traveled back to Henrie, resting there devotionally. "But Geneva shall never say that I shut her from what was once, and still is, her home; nor kept her from the little child who loves her. Geneva knows, and always must know, that it is possible for her to come back to me—for Henrie's sake, for Henrie's sake, for Henrie's! I—hate her."

"Don't say that before the baby," begged Helen, "or to me."

Again the pause fell.

"Helen, what good can come of it," queried Germaine, "your wasting your life for——" There were no words for him to finish.

"None," she said, drearily smiling. "But I shall do it—to the end."

"No letters," said Fenton, reappearing as sulkily as he had gone.

We were all saying good-night.

"And if you want any help, Jack," said Essie earnestly, "never scruple to call me, at any hour."

"Want help?" echoed Jack blankly. Then his eyes stole anxiously to Henrie. He went white. "Why, you don't think——" and he put his hand to his throat to strangle the words there.

"Henrie is all right," said Helen quickly. "Let her sleep."

He looked mighty lonely as we shut the door upon him.

How nice and normal the daylight is, to be sure; next day things were back to the usual. And next night the play went finely. The house just shouted at Germaine's scene in the last act. He did play it exceptionally well, exerting every effort of his mind and heart to bring a smile to the face of his audience, which to him was an audience of only one—tired little Henrie propped disconsolately in the wings, waiting for the tributary roar of laughter. It cheered her like wine.

"But what in the world ails my Little Red Hen that she sinks back so quickly?" asked Germaine, worried to death, as he bundled the baby into her wraps after the perforamnce. She lay as inert as a doll.

"She's just spindling away for a woman," blurted Chapman Childs. "Girl children are lots like that. They need a mother's arms around 'em to keep 'em alive."

Wednesday night Henrie was not strong enough even to sit in a chair, so a sofa was fixed for her in the wings.

Again Germaine rollicked through his part, again he put his best work in his last scene, and again his reward was less the tumultuous applause of the audience than the glimmer of light that lit up Henrie's face—a little bit of a face, no bigger than a penny kite.

One line in particular had been made Henrie's own, for Jack used to fling it at her in comradeship, "If you love me, look at me!" It was a "catch" line climaxing an absurdly funny courtship scene with Essie Airly. The stage was set for a moonlight garden, just off a ballroom, bits of waltz music playing softly all the time. The line, simple as it was, invariably "brought down the house," so full was it of ludicrously ardent exultation. During its delivery, Germaine would smile at Henrie, she smiling back, the rippled mirth of the audience a pleasure to them both.

A pleasure while Henrie was well, that is; but very little pleasure now, for as the week dragged to its close it was more than plain that the child was in a seriously bad way.

Sunday night her father couldn't even dress her, but put a blanket around her little white wrapper and tucked her on the sofa in his dressing-room while he made up. Her sleep wasn't sleep exactly, but a sort of stupor, so that she was oblivious of what was going on. Essie never thought of lowering her voice.

She hurried in with Helen and came right out with the thing.

"Jack," she said, "Geneva's company is in town. They evidently don't play Sunday night. I thought you ought to know. I passed Geneva in the street not a minute since."

"Speak lower!" ordered Jack, furious.

"Geneva!" cried Henrie, pushing away the blanket and struggling to get up. "Jack, did you hear that? Geneva in our town—at last! My mother! My pretty Geneva! Is she here? Will she come? Jack, talk to me! Will my mother be here soon?"

The fire in her eyes wrung truth from him.

"Henrie, I don't think so," he said, slowly, hoarsely. "I don't think she will."

The child dropped back as if shot, and Helen ran to her and knelt by her.

"Henrie!" she cried, frightened. "Can I do anything for you?"

"Yes; you can go away," whispered Henrie hostilely.

Perforce, Helen went.

Quickly making up and dressing, Jack sat beside his baby and watched the havoc of change which deepened on her face. Her breathing was all wrong. That small, uncertain heart of hers had got the shock the doctor was always warning against. Something must be done to set it right.

Germaine rose blindly to his feet and scrawled out a telegram. Going to his door, he chanced upon Fenton Lessing and wrung his hand as if he had not seen him for weeks.

"You'll send this, won't you?" he asked. "To Geneva."

Lessing glanced down at the message: "Come to the theater immediately. Henrie is dangerously ill."

"Sure, old chap," said Lessing. Then, pityingly. "Don't worry, Jack; please don't."

Going back to the sofa, Germaine said with impressive distinctness:

"Little Red Hen, listen: I've changed my mind. I think Geneva will come."

Henrie opened her eyes and seemed to come back from somewhere; she spoke coherently but passionately:

"You always tell me the truth, don't you, Jack?"

"Always."

"And you really think she may come?"

"I really think she may come."

"Carry me to the wings, Jack. It will be your cue pretty soon."

Lovingly he carried her to her accustomed place. He comprehended that she dare not speak of the hope which gathered strength from his promise, but the life of it was tingling happily through her.

Then commenced his torture, for the play was on. Every minute that he could he stood beside Henrie, trying to reply assuredly to the constant question:

"Jack, is Geneva here yet?"

"Not yet, Little Red Hen."

Finally Henrie sickened of the asking and dropped into a heavy stupor.

Just as Jack tore himself away to go on for the last act, Lessing brought a telegram:

Your ruse is too flimsy, Jack. Invent something else. GENEVA.

Crushing the paper in his fist, Jack went upon the stage and plunged into the gayety of the scene, carrying his audience cheerily with him.

And Henrie never moved—her pet scene, too.

To her quiet form Jack played as he had never played before, till the great house rose at him in applause.

Yet still she never stirred.

Then he came to the test line, the line of their freemasonry. Into his voice there leaped a loud fear—it rang commandingly:

"If you love me, look at me! look at me!" To this he added, unknowing, "Henrie!" And again: "Henrie!"

Unable to continue, he paused—the silence intense, except for the music.

Dazed and obeying the command of his spirit, Henrie sat up and slipped from the couch. Swaying and faltering, she went right out before the footlights; not that she saw them; blind, indeed, and drawn but by the homing instinct, she staggered across the center of the stage till she came to her father's stricken feet. Then she raised her hands. And he lifted her to his breast.

From the audience came a stir of expectant amusement. The music swelled a little louder. To raise her feeble voice above these noises, Henrie spoke very clearly.

"Jack," she said, and her voice "carried" to the galleries. "Is Geneva here?"

"No, dear."

As if the words had been a stab she blanched beneath them. Across the stage, Essie Airly sank into a chair and turned away her face.

"Jack," continued Henrie, still clearly, "is Geneva coming?"

Before the trusting honesty of her big bright eyes of brown his lie was silenced.

"No!" he said at last.

Into her glance there came a quick gleam of reproach that he should hurt her so. Her wee wasted hand crept slowly to her heart, clutching at its burden of pain. The music kept on and a little laugh wafted up from the audience. Then Henrie's head, framed in its red-gold curls, dropped heavily back upon Jack's arm.

At that some one behind the scenes, with awful intuition, gave an order. And the final curtain made its slow descent.

(Copyrighted.)

"I've Read It," Said Jack, Gamely.

FROM WOMAN'S POINT OF VIEW

We could live in comparative peace were it not for the meddling of people who forget that they have quite enough to do in attending to their own affairs. We cannot avoid tale-bearing, although we can keep it within reasonable bounds by refusing to hear stories. I used to think it was possible to impress tale-bearers with one's aversion to tattle, but I have been forced to the conclusion that there are persons too dense to receive impressions, and one hardly likes to be brutal enough to deal in plain speech while being sure of the consequences.

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It takes a deal of tact to live in harmony with all sorts of human beings. Preferences have to be avoided on account of jealousies, and conversations have to be literally chewed to bits as we are advised to do by our food. When we learn of any of the unfair things said of us, criticisms of our appearance, our manners or acts, we are bound to feel uncomfortable, and that attitude is sure to affect our treatment of those whose tongues have been allowed to wag carelessly. I have seen hundreds of peace-loving men and women who have narrowed their circle of friends and acquaintances down to those who do not interfere with their comfort and serenity. A friend who has been tested and found wanting is quietly dropped, let down so gradually as not to be aware of the process.

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Life is too short for any part of it to be spent in unnecessary discomfort. It is none too smooth with all our care, and if we hope to get more than a taste of its sweetness we must pick our daily surroundings with great care. There are pleasant companions to be found, interesting books, good music, amusing plays, and any number of diversions which do not depend upon men and women outside of the family circle. One good thing the automobile craze has done for humanity—it has made us more intimate with nature and less dependent upon the society of our fellow-creatures.

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The husband of a woman who has always been fond of social events told me that when he offered her the choice between $10 worth of opera tickets and an auto ride of the same cost, she chose the latter, much to his surprise and gratification. He has always preferred nature, but good-humoredly gave in to her preferences. As her health is of chief importance to him he is glad to turn her attention from the strength-sapping entertainments which she has always regarded as a necessary part of existence.

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I was told recently that a young matron is pluming herself over the knowledge that in the five years of her married life she has not lost a friend to her knowledge. She has added to the list, however, so slowly as to cause comment among those who know her. She never extends an invitation to man or woman till she is ready to place them on a friendly footing, and so clever is she at reading character that up to date she has not regretted a single addition. She declares that she has no time to spend with busybodies and that she is not willing to share her private life with the curious.

BETTY BRADEEN.

TENANT'S LOSS IN BURGLARY.

French Court Decides Owner of Property Is Liable.

From le Journal.

To Comtesse de La Poeze has just been granted 2,000 francs damages against the proprietor of her apartment as compensation for a burglary committed in her apartment during her absence after she had confided the key to the concierges with instructions that they should watch over the safety of her belongings.

On July 30, 1905, an apartment rented by Comtesse de La Poeze, 38 rue de Lille, was broken into during her absence and some valuable jewels were stolen. The burglars were soon afterward arrested, and it was found that one of them was the son of the concierges, into whose care the apartment had been given. When the burglary was committed the concierges were absent on a holiday and the key to the apartment had been intrusted to their son.

The court's judgment declared that the proprietor of the house is responsible for the acts of his concierge, and that the Comtesse de La Poeze was acting in according with Parisian custom in putting her confidence in the concierges, who had been placed in a position of responsibility by the owner of the house.

Consequently the court admitted the comtesse's claim in principle, but reduced it from 6,000 francs to 2,000 francs.

The Third Person.

From the Nashville Banner.

In the town where the Rev. Dr. Emmons was pastor lived a physician tinctured with the grossest form of pantheism, who declared that if ever he met Dr. Emmons he would easily floor him in argument. One day they met at the home of a patient. The physician asked Dr. Emmons:

"How old are you, sir?"

The doctor, astounded at his rudeness, quietly replied, "Sixty-two; may I ask, sir, how long you have lived?"

"Since the creation," was the reply of the pantheist.

"Ah, I suppose, then, you were in the Garden of Eden, with Adam and Eve?"

"I was there, sir."

"Well," said the wily divine, "we all know there was a third person present."

Would or Would Not.

From Punch.

Sergeant of Royal Irish Constabulary (interviewing new member of the force)—Well, Maginnis, 'tis the fine sthrong fleshy-lookin' fella ye are. Now, if a despirit man attacked ye wid a knife an' a pistol, would ye run or fight?

Recruit—Shure, yer honor, I would.

Sergeant—What, ye would?

Recruit—Begorra, I mane I would not, Sor!

Sergeant—Ah, now, that's betther! G'long wid ye, me bucko!

Maritime Note.

From London Spare Moments.

Winks—I see Newlywed at the club quite often since his baby came. I thought he was firmly anchored to a home life.

Binks—He was, but at the first squall he began to drag his anchor.

S. F. B. MORSE, THE ARTIST

Son of the Inventor Recalls His Distinguished Father's Artistic Heyday.

One of the most interesting links connecting the present day with the mighty achievements of the past is J. E. Finley Morse, son of Samuel F. B. Morse, the inventor of the telegraph.

Eighty-four years old, Mr. Morse lives near Westport, on the Connecticut shore of the Sound, in the family of his niece, Mrs. Susan Morse Perry, favorite granddaughter of the great inventor, and wife of George K. Perry, country gentleman. The family celebrated the 118th anniversary of the birth of the great inventor on April 27.

Mr. Morse's recollections of his distinguished father, and the achievements that have immortalized his name, are particularly interesting at this time, when wireless telegraphy has caused such a commotion in scientific circles. But the aged son of the inventor does not believe that the later discovery has astonished the world as much as did that of his father, says the New York Herald.

Strange to say, Mr. Morse remembers his father as distinguished in art long before the telegraph was even faintly conceived. It was during the youth of this man that Samuel F. B. Morse was a struggling young artist, a portrait painter of repute, president of the National Academy of Design, and the most zealous one of its founders. The circumstances connected with the birth of J. E. Finley Morse wrought such changes in the life of the artist Morse that his thoughts were diverted from art into the open channel of invention, for at that time he lost his beautiful young wife, whom he adored, who was his inspiration, companion of his struggles, and his counsellor. What success in art might have been in store for the gifted Morse had not the heavy hand of sorrow fallen upon him none can say. It may have been art rather than invention that would have immortalized his name.

Has Many Works of Art.

Mrs. Susan Morse Perry has inherited many of the works of art of her distinguished grandfather. The home of the Perrys is one of the most commodious of the Compo Beach summer homes, so that the family lives there all the year round—"for, you see," explained Mrs. Perry, "we could not move about when we have Uncle Finley to make comfortable. I believe he is about the most important inheritance I have from my grandfather. Uncle Finley is a bachelor, and ever since I was married he has lived with me."

Mr. Finley Morse is the ideal old gentleman in appearance. His faculties are impaired from the weight of years, and deafness has been an infirmity since early life, but he is greatly interested in passing events, keeps up with the news in the daily newspapers, reads all the magazines, rakes the lawn in summer, and splits the kindling wood when he feels like doing so. In the winter, even on the coldest days, he shoveis snow and takes a constitutional about the grounds. He has an easy chair in the sunniest corner of the downstairs sitting-room, a bright light to read by, a cigar after dinner, and plenty of loving hands to wait on him and make him comfortable.

"No one about the place is busier than Uncle Finley," said Mrs. Perry. "He is interested in the horses and dogs and chickens, and in making the garden. However, I don't think we can persuade him to talk, for his habit of silence has grown upon him of late years, as is the case with the hopelessly deaf."

Dislikes the Automobile.

So we wrote a few questions on paper, and Mr. Morse studied them gravely, and then from the quavering voice that had almost forgotten how to articulate we gathered that he was much interested in wireless telegraphy and also that he did not like automobiles.

"When I was a boy," said Mr. Morse, "I went to Mr. Skinner's school in New Haven, and also to a French school in Rye. I learned the printer's trade when I was a young man, and I worked in the office of the Christian Observer. My father wrote articles for it, and my uncle, Charles Morse, worked for it—got subscribers for it."

"My uncle Finley was never a son of toil to any great extent," said Mrs. Perry. "Scarlet fever when he was young left him with deafness and otherwise incapacitated him, and then his father's fortune was the means of removing all the financial problems of existence. He has failed noticeably in the last few years, and though his deafness has doubt less affected his mentality so that he lives within himself he reads his newspapers and magazines and rarely speaks, so we hardly know what he thinks about. Now and then he has an idea, and he reads about all the new inventions.

"I wish sometimes that I could make him talk and tell of the scenes and experiences of his youth. He was the youngest child of my grandfather's first wife, and she died one month after his birth. Her death was without doubt the greatest sorrow in the life of Grandfather Morse, for she was his aid and counsellor. She alone knew of all his struggles. I have his letters to her written before and after their marriage. They are so full of consideration and love, and through them all there is a vein of piety so characteristic of the time, and all written with scrupulous care, and in the quaint formality of his day, when a letter was scarcely the insignificant trifle that it is at present."

Fine Artistic Example.

In the library of Mrs. Perry's home there hangs on the wall above the tall brick mantelpiece surmounting a huge cavernous fireplace an oil painting of her grandmother Morse, with two children, posed after the style of Angelica Kauffman's picture of the Duchess of Devonshire and children. It was painted in 1820 and entitles Morse to recognition among the best artists of his time. In the wide hall is a huge canvas representing a life size portrait of the artist's sister, and in the drawing-room is a small painting of Morse, painted by himself. He is adorned by the medals sent by the Emperor of Austria in 1855, and with the decoration in diamonds from the Sultan of Turkey in 1848; also the insignia of a chevalier of the Legion of Honor, conferred by the Emperor of France in 1856.

"These medals were presented by the family to the National Museum in Washington," said Mrs. Perry, "at the time of the death of my grandfather's second wife. She was Miss Sarah Griswold, of Poughkeepsie, and was a deaf mute, and was married to my grandfather in 1848, twenty-three years after the death of my grandmother. Edward Lind Morse, the artist, was one of the children of this later marriage, and he has inherited his father's talent for art, just as my late brother, Samuel F. B. Morse, inherited a talent for invention.

"I remember my grandfather very well, indeed," said Mrs. Perry. "He was tall, with white hair, a long white beard, and he held me on his knee. He was very fond of children, and there were a lot of us in the family, for his children of his early marriage were all married and had children contemporaneous with the children of his second marriage.

"My uncle, here, remembers his grandfather, Jedediah Morse, better, possibly, than any of the associations of his early life, since, after his mother's death, his grandparents reared her four children, of whom he was the youngest. Jedediah Morse was a Congregational clergyman, and was preaching in Charlestown, N. H., at the time of Washington's inauguration. He published so many geographies that he has been called the father of American geography.

Studied in London.

"It is rather interesting to think that while my great-grandfather was devoted to facts, and had studied his theology under Dr. Jonathan Edwards, son of the original Edwards, and was a man of persistence and energy and not at all an imaginative man, and while his wife was a Finley and represented the sturdiest kind of New England character, this couple not only gave to their talented son the artistic temperament, but also made all kinds of sacrifices in order that he might study painting under one of the best artists in Boston, and afterward sent him to London to study, in the year 1811. I have always been greatly interested in my grandfather's history. I have a scrap book of letters written by him."

Here Mrs. Perry produced a collection of old letters. "Fancy this one, written in 1810," she exclaimed, "on the eve of his graduation from Yale, just ninety-nine years ago. It says: 'I am now released from college and am attending to painting. As to my choice of a profession, I still think I was made for a painter, and would be obliged to you to make such arrangements with Mr. Allston for my studying with him as you shall think expedient. I should desire to study with him during the winter, and as he expects to return to England in the spring I should admire to be able to go there with him. But of this we will talk when we meet at home.'

"I like to fancy him in London and meeting all the great artists, as he did. Benjamin West was at the height of his fame then. Listen to this letter:

"'I called upon Mr. West, at his home in Newman street, one morning. As I entered the studio, a half length portrait of George III stood before me on an easel, and Mr. West was sitting with his back toward me, copying from it upon canvas. My name having been mentioned to him, he did not turn, but, pointing with the pencil he held in his hand to the portrait from which he was copying, he said:

"'"Do you see that picture, Mr. Morse?"

"'"Yes, sir," I said. "I perceive it is the portrait of the King."

King Sat for Him.

"'"Well," said Mr. West, "the King was sitting to me for that portrait when the box containing the American Declaration of Independence was handed to him."

"'"Indeed," I answered, "and what appeared to be the emotions of the King? What did he say?"

"'"His reply was characteristic of the goodness of his heart," said Mr. West. "If they can be happier under the government they have chosen than under mine," he said, "I shall be happy."'

"When Grandfather Morse came back to America he was about twenty-four years old, and he thought his fortune was made, but he had terrible struggles. This country wasn't strong for art in those days. As he had the inventor's ambition at that time he invented some kind of an engine to be used by fire departments. But it was not a success. He wasted a year upon it, and in one of these letters he tells how the neighbors all gathered to see it tested, and the verdict was that Morse would better stick to his brush and leave machinery alone. So he went back to his easel and made a living at portrait work.

Told of Old Letters.

"I have followed him through his art struggles as well as I can in his letters. He painted fifty-three portraits in Charleston, S. C., in 1818. In 1821, he was busy in Washington, working in a room in the Capitol, painting an immense canvas 11 by 7½ feet, representing the members of the House of Representatives. There were eighty portraits, but the picture was not a success. It was finally sold to an Englishman, who took it over to London. But it was brought back again, and one time, in the year 1847, it was found nailed to a partition in the third story of a downtown building in New York, all covered with dust. Then Daniel Huntington bought it.

"From a studio in Broadway, opposite Trinity churchyard, he wrote that there were many artists in New York and that all were poor and complaining. Money, he said, was the chief end of man, and also that New York was given up wholly to commerce. It was just at the time when he was at his lowest depths that he had a commission from the city to paint Gen. Lafayette. He wrote from Wishington, where he went to accomplish the work: 'The general is agreeable. He introduced me to his son, saying, "This is Mr. Morse, the painter. He has come to Washington to take the topography of my face."'

Painted Gen. Lafayette.

"Gen. Lafayette was giving him the last sitting for the picture when the news of the death of Grandmother Morse was conveyed to him. Then Uncle Finley was a month old. The family have always regarded this event as the crisis in my grandfather's life. This was in the year 1825. But for that he might never have been the inventor of the telegraph. Who can tell? During her life he was lover, enthusiast, artist and idealist. Her death was such a blow to him that he gave way to feelings of despondency that were nearly his undoing. But the following year, in company with others, he founded the National Academy of Design and was elected its first president. He gave much of his time to it, doubtless for the reason that he was in no mood for his work. At the same time he became interested in experiments in electricity. Although he went to Europe again to study art, his inspiration was gone, and art was not the same. It was on his return voyage that he conceived the idea of the telegraph instrument. Before he became an inventor there was still a time when he was professor of literature of the arts of design in the New York University. He painted some in later life, but his commercial interests did not harmonize well with art, and so the latter became merely an avocation. His life was replete with interest, and I never tire of studying it, especially those early years long before he was ever heard of, but when his character was forming. He is a kind of living personage to me."

Mrs. Susan Morse Perry is an enthusiastic lover of art, a collector of antiques, an ardent horsewoman, has a kennel of high bred dogs, and also wields a facile pen; especially was she heard from at the time of the Cuban war, when she figured in the magazines as an ardent defender of the Cuban cause.

Suffragist Endless Telephone Chain.

From the Springfield Republican.

At the recent election in Aurora, Ill., the women were urged to form an "endless telephone chain," each woman pledging herself to call up five male voters every day, and urge them to vote right. If it takes as long to get people on the telephone in Aurora as it often does in Massachusetts, the women could have voted themselves in half the time.